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CORRESPONDENCE

WHO ARE THE CONTRAS?

To the editors:

Edgar Chamorro would have us believe that Nicaragua's "idealistic young people . . . are being used as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy by the CIA . . . and Somocista politicians who simply want to go back to Nicaragua to get back the money and power they lost in 1979" ("Confessions of a Contra," August 5). Arturo Cruz says, "Congress is sadly wrong if it imagines that it can obtain peace by cutting off aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents. The insurgency is no longer a product of United States intervention; it is the revolt of Nicaraguans against oppression by other Nicaraguans." I believe that Mr. Chamorro stands virtually alone with the Sandinistas in his judgment.

There was a time when the *contras* were a small band largely dependent on the CIA and ex-National Guardsmen. At that time it was not supported by prominent Democratic leaders such as Arturo Cruz, or ex-Sandinista patriots such as Edén Pastora (whose only complaint about the FDN *contras* now is that they are willing to negotiate with the Sandinistas). Nor were they connected with leftist political parties, such as the Independent Liberal Party.

Today the resistance movement consists of every democratic political party, free labor union, and business coalition in Nicaragua. The church has offered to mediate a true national dialogue leading to free elections in Nicaragua. And the people overwhelmingly support the church and oppose the government.

It is hard to understand why THE NEW REPUBLIC, which has been so supportive of true national reconciliation in Nicaragua, would lend its pages to a traitor whose idea of reconciliation is

"the abolition of the *contra* army." Clearly, there could be no quicker path to the permanent Sandinista dictatorship, which the Nicaraguan people reject. No friend of democracy would advocate such a solution, certainly not Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the most revered man in Nicaragua today.

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